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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 QUITO 001203

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DEPT FOR WHA/AND, WHA/PPC, EB, AND DRL/IL. USDOL FOR JORGE PEREZ-LOPEZ. GENEVA FOR JOHN CHAMBERLIN. PLEASE PASS USTR FOR A/USTR CLATANOFF, V. LOPEZ AND B. HARMON.

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ELAB](#) [PGOV](#) [EC](#)

SUBJECT: NEW MOL AN ALLY ON LABOR RIGHTS

1. Summary: New Minister of Labor Galo Chiriboga is concerned about labor rights in Ecuador and hopes to improve unions' image, increase dialogue between business and union representatives, and enforce ILO commitments. Chiriboga will travel to Geneva for the meetings of the ILO Governing Body where Ecuador will seek the vice presidency. Chiriboga will not attend the next round of FTA negotiations in Guayaquil. Vice Minister Betty Amores will head the GOE labor negotiating team. End Summary.

#### Chiriboga's Labor Rights Agenda

2. In meetings with EmbOffs shortly after taking office, Chiriboga said he wants to improve unions' public image by encouraging capacity building. He said he will work with unions to come up with a proposal. Chiriboga wants to modernize unions to address the poor quality of leadership.

3. One of Chiriboga's goals while in office is to strengthen the tripartite National Labor Council, which he contends has not been used to its full potential. Chiriboga told EmbOffs on May 16 that dialogue should go beyond labor conditions and include broader economic issues, such as employment generation policies. Chiriboga also wants to promote collective bargaining. He said only 11 agreements have been signed thus far in 2005, reflecting both weak unions and structural constraints against unionization. Chiriboga also told us he was in favor of permitting industry-wide unions, but did not specify whether this would require legislation.

4. Chiriboga said on May 23 that he welcomed a visit to Ecuador by US union representatives. He said he hoped to sign an agreement between the GOE and US unions saying that the GOE would work with unions to avoid illegal migration to the US, and that US unions would give special attention to the protection of Ecuadorian migrants under US labor laws.

#### Looking to Work Closely with the ILO

5. Chiriboga plans to spend three weeks in Geneva at the ILO annual meetings as part of an Ecuadorian delegation including two other MOL representatives, four union representatives, and three business representatives. Ecuador is seeking one of the three vice presidencies of the ILO Governing Body. Chiriboga said Ecuador had some support from GRULAC members for its candidacy. Chiriboga told LabOff on May 23 that he does not intend to cover up any labor rights weaknesses in Ecuador. Instead, he wants to identify problems and promote a plan to address areas where Ecuador does not fully comply with ILO conventions.

6. Chiriboga said he had not received copies of a report elaborated by ILO/Lima and delivered to the previous Minister on areas where Ecuador does not comply fully with ILO conventions. He said he has asked the ILO for help in identifying any gaps in the Ministry of Labor's enforcement of child labor, health and safety, and other commitments.

7. Patricio Contreras of the AFL-CIO Solidarity Center told LabOff on May 19 that a high-level ILO delegation might visit to Ecuador in July. The delegation would be composed of Luis Somavia (ILO/Geneva), Ricardo Hernandez Pulido (ILO/Lima), Guy Ryder (of international labor organization CIOISL), and perhaps also including a representative from the AFL-CIO in Washington. The visit would be intended to identify areas for future ILO assistance.

#### Vice Minister to Head FTA Labor Table

8. Chiriboga did not seem familiar with details on the labor aspects of an FTA, but was encouraged to hear that it included respect for Ecuador's labor law and ILO commitments. Chiriboga has named Labor Vice Minister Betty Amores as the new head of the labor negotiating table for the Andean Free Trade Agreement.

Comment

19. We are encouraged by the new Minister's interest in the ILO and other tripartite efforts here to strengthen labor rights. An ILO visit to Ecuador in July could help cement this budding interest and advance labor rights. We will continue to educate the new government on labor aspects of a free trade agreement.  
Chacon